



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Pain may be acute or chronic. Acute pain, which is severe and lasts a short time, is generally caused by injury or a temporary condition such as a broken bone, childbirth, or migraine headache. Chronic or persistent pain, which recurs or persists over time and interferes with functioning, is frequently due to chronic health problems such as arthritis, back problems, fibromyalgia, or shingles. However, pain often has no tangible diagnosis or identifiable cause. Pain can make a woman feel confused or afraid, so much so that she curtails normal daily activities or spends her time sitting or in bed. It is estimated that about 15% of the adult population is partially or completely disabled due to pain. There are strategies that can help control pain, including medication, stretching and exercise, weight control, using correct posture, acupuncture, and decreasing anxiety. It is also important to understand the characteristics of women who live with pain to improve their quality of life.

The 1998 California Women's Health Survey asked women: **"During the last 12 months, has pain often kept you from doing things you wanted to do?"** Other questions asked about smoking, alcohol use, weight, number of days of

limited activity due to physical health and to overall poor health, self-rating of health, and limitation in six usual activities.

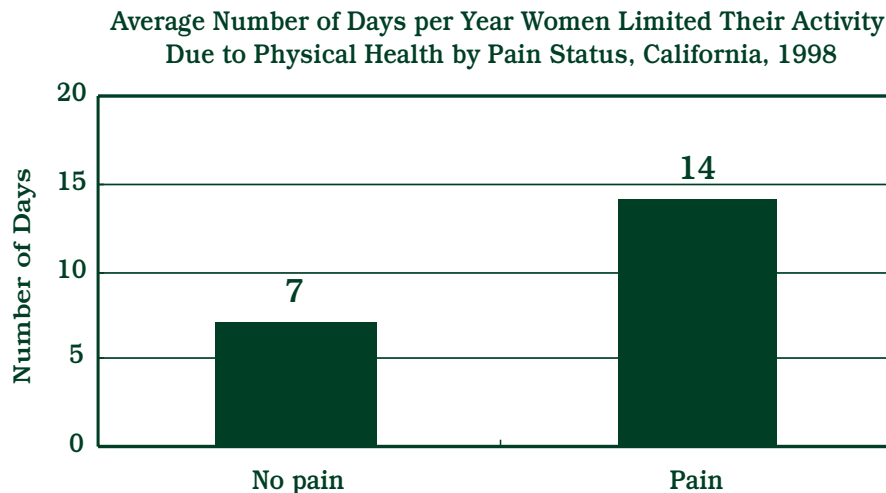
Overall, 22% of the women reported that pain often limited their activities. Limited activity was more common among older women: 30% of women ages 55 and older reported pain, 24% of women ages 35-54 and 16% ages 18-34. About 25% of Black, White, and Hispanic women reported pain, while 17% of Asian women reported pain.

Women who reported pain were more likely than women without pain to smoke (28% vs. 21%), be overweight (31% vs. 19%), indicate poor/fair health status (34% vs. 9%) and report activity limitation (75% vs. 20%).

Major activity limitation - difficulty in ability to bend or lift; walk one block; or eat, bathe or dress oneself - was reported by 56% of women who reported pain and only 9% of those who did not report pain. Less severe activity limitation - ability to do vigorous or moderate activity or climb several flights of stairs - was reported by 66% who reported pain and 17% of those who did not report pain.

PAIN AND ACTIVITY AMONG CALIFORNIA WOMEN, 1998

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